scientific and technological activity are not lost sight of. Participation of private sector is also being pursued to pool resources and funds specially for technology development.

Extinction of bananas

3856. SHRIRUMANDLA RAAMACHANDRAYYA :

SHRI YADLAPATI VENKAT RAO :

SHRI RAVULA CHANDRA SEKAR REDDY:

Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that bananas may face extinction within ten years on account of pests and diseases; and

(b) if so, the genetic engineering efforts proposed to save bananas from going extinct?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SHRI BACH1 SINGH RAWAT) : (a) and (b) As per the report in an international journal, New Scientist (January, 2003), a leading researcher has stated that banana could be wiped out by two diseases, namely, Panama disease and Black Sigatoka, that have struck Africa, South America and Asia. However the reports by American Phytopathological Society (APS) and UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) state that banana is not on the verge of extinction since it is unlikely that these diseases will prove fatal. These diseases can be controlled through use of fungicides and pesticides. In addition, use of germplasm of greater genetic diversity for plantation and developing genetically engineered disease resistant plants will also help in tackling this problem.Studies on genetic engineering and genomics are underway in many research laboratories in India and abroad.

So far, there is no risk of extinction of Banana in India because bananas are cultivated under polyclonal system, whereas it is grown as monoclonal system in Latin America and Caribbean countries. India harbours a wide range of banana varieties; some of which constitute a valuable gene pool to be used to develop resistance to major pests and diseases for use in developing improved varieities.

Revival of VSP

3857. DR. DASARI NARAYANA RAO : Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state :